FAQ  Criterion Scientific and/or societal impact

1. **What is the difference between scientific and societal impact?**

   Scientific impact is the impact of research on one’s own, related or broader scientific field. Societal impact has been defined by NWO as every social (cultural, economic, industrial, ecological and/or social) change that is (partly) the result of the knowledge and skills gained through the proposed research.

2. **Where can I find more information about the Impact Outlook approach to help me make the right choice and approach in my application?**

   You can find an online workshop in NWO’s e-learning environment. Go to https://impact.nwo.nl/en and select 'An Impact Outlook for your Research'. This generic workshop is a tool to help you make choices and devise an approach to knowledge utilisation.

3. **How does the assessment committee assess the justification of the focus?**

   Applicants have the choice to focus primarily on scientific impact, societal impact or a combination thereof. The elaboration of the criterion depends on the choice the applicant makes. If a proposal is primarily focused on scientific impact, then elaboration of the parts of the criterion dealing with scientific impact is particularly important. If a proposal is primarily aimed at social impact, then the elaboration of those parts of the criterion is particularly important. And if the choice is made to focus on both forms of impact, then the elaboration of both parts of the criterion is relevant.

   If both forms of impact are targeted, the elaboration will differ from a proposal that focuses on only one form of impact. The committee assesses whether the motivation is convincing and whether it is appropriate for the proposed project. Part of this may be whether the applicant shows that it has sufficiently explored the context of the research and has not overlooked any obvious opportunities for the project in terms of impact. The assessment is also based on the reference reports and the rebuttal.

4. **Is it necessary to include both types of impact (scientific impact and societal impact) to obtain a good score for this assessment criterion?**

   It is not necessary to include both types of impact in order to obtain a good score for this assessment criterion. Both a focus on scientific impact and a focus on societal impact or a combination can lead to a good score. There is no difference in value between the two types of impact. It is up to the applicants to make a choice on which type of impact they want to focus, and to clearly motivate why that choice fits their project.

   Choosing to focus primarily on one of the two forms of impact does not mean that there is no attention for the other form of impact. Applicants are encouraged to also give proportionate attention to the form of impact they do not initially focus on.

   Example: The applicant chooses to focus on scientific impact. The applicant motivates this choice and explains the potential for scientific impact. If the applicant does not yet see any potential for social impact from the proposed research, the applicant describes how attention will be paid to unforeseen opportunities and how this will be dealt with. It is up to the applicant to choose the appropriate way of doing this and to motivate it.
5. Part of the criterion Scientific and/or Societal impact is to give proportional attention to increase (unforeseen) opportunities for the form of impact that is not the primary focus. What if your focus is on both forms of impact?

If in the application the focus is on both forms of impact, there is no question of a 'non-chosen form of impact'. The elaboration of both the scientific and the societal impact are already included in the assessment of this criterion.

6. How does the assessment committee assess the form of impact that is not the primary focus?

If a primary focus is chosen on one of the two forms of impact, applicants are expected to pay some attention to increasing (unforeseen) opportunities for the other form of impact. We expect the applicant to form an idea of how foreseen and unforeseen opportunities for impact can be found and used during the course of the project.

For example, there may be opportunities for impact, but applicants may only want to take a modest step. Or applicants do not yet see any opportunities for impact, but they do have an idea of how they can monitor opportunities for impact during the research. It can also mean, for example, that (unforeseen) opportunities for impact are picked up by others. In that case, the applicant's own role in making that possible must be clearly described.

The Committee assesses whether the justification is convincing and appropriate to the proposed project. This may include whether the applicant shows that it has sufficiently explored the context of the research and has not overlooked any obvious opportunities for the project in terms of impact.

7. To what extent is an implementation plan necessary in the application?

The committee is asked to assess the criteria according to the Vici call for proposals. The elaboration of the criterion depends very much on the choice the applicant makes. If both forms of impact are focused on, the elaboration will differ from a proposal that focuses on only one form of impact. Ideas and plans about the implementation of (scientific and/or societal) impact can help to substantiate the potential and relevance.

If a focus on societal impact is chosen (whether or not in combination with scientific impact), it is requested to elaborate on the added value of the project for societal impact, the potential for societal impact in the short and long term, and a vision on how the proposed research can lead to societal impact. Ideas and plans about the implementation of societal impact help to make clear the potential and vision. Describing a route per example and what productive interactions are possible, given the research proposal, can also underpin the potential, relevance and vision where necessary.

The committee will assess whether the justification is appropriate and whether there are possibilities for impact that are not described in the proposal, and take this into account in its assessment.

For detailed information and tools to write the paragraph on social and/or scientific impact please refer to the e-learning on the NWO website: https://impact.nwo.nl/en.

8. Can a budget be requested for knowledge exploitation activities?

The funding module Knowledge Utilisation can be used to fund a wide variety of activities that contribute to knowledge utilisation. Make the budget for knowledge exploitation in line with the application and be as specific as possible and motivate the choices made. The conditions for financing set in the Vici call for proposals are leading. If unforeseen opportunities for impact are involved, activities to find these opportunities can also be included if they are specified.

9. Where can I find more information about Knowledge Utilisation?
The information in the Vici call for proposals is leading. Paragraph 4.3 under the criteria states how the applications will be assessed. Paragraph 2.2.1 'Knowledge exploitation: background of the impact outlook approach' explains the impact outlook approach used in the Vici call. A more detailed explanation of NWO's knowledge exploitation policy can be found on the website: https://www.nwo.nl/en/knowledge-utilisation.